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OTHER MATTERS

United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office

Report of the Administrator

I. PURPOSE

1. The present report, in addition to responding to Governing Council decision 93/33 on the role of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO), describes UNDP arrangements for handling anti-desertification activities, especially in support of the implementation of the International Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa.

II. THE NEW INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT FOR DESERTIFICATION CONTROL

2. The Convention, adopted in June 1994, recognizes desertification as a problem of global dimension and as one of the most serious obstacles to sustainable human development in drylands. The affected countries are among the poorest and it is estimated that up to 900 million people are at risk. This is one of the most important challenges facing many UNDP programme countries. The Convention calls for innovative, participatory approaches to address sustainable human development in the drylands. These include a new generation of national action programmes in the affected countries, in addition to actions at subregional and regional levels, with special emphasis given to coordination and harmonization within affected countries and among donors. While giving priority to Africa through the implementation of urgent actions to be launched prior to the entry into force of the Convention, preparatory activities will also be undertaken in other affected regions of the world.

III. UNDP/UNSO FUTURE ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

3. UNDP has taken initial steps to strengthen its capacity to fulfil its role in supporting desertification activities worldwide, particularly within the framework of the Convention. In this context, a central entity has been established within the new Sustainable Energy and Environment Division (SEED)

of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) to spearhead and supportUNDP work in desertification control and dryland degradation in all affected programme countries. UNSO will serve as this central entity and carry out the
following functions:

(a) Develop policy and strategy on desertification and dryland management relating to UNDP work in this area;

(b) Support the implementation of the Convention;

(c) Provide substantive advice and technical backstopping to UNDP activities in desertification control/dryland management;

(d) Develop programmes at regional, interregional and global levels;

(e) Undertake advocacy and resource mobilization.

In its work, UNSO will collaborate closely with all of the concerned units within UNDP, including the Regional Bureaux and the complementary environmental units within SEED. This will build on the cooperative platform outlined in the overall anti-desertification strategy UNSO prepared in late 1993, at the request of the Administrator.

4. The crucial challenge before UNDP now is how to assist in transforming the spirit, principles and provisions of the Convention into concrete actions that will have a positive impact on the livelihoods of households and communities in affected areas. The UNDP focus on sustainable human development and the UNDP field network, in addition to the experience and expertise gained through UNSO activities, enable UNDP to play an effective lead role in supporting the implementation of the Convention. Specifically, this role would aim to:

(a) Support the preparation and implementation of national action programmes by taking into account and helping to integrate existing initiatives, such as environmental action plans, national Agenda 21 and Capacity 21;

(b) Support the establishment of new partnership arrangements to bring together the key stakeholders to ensure a coordinated focus on anti-desertification actions in the most affected developing countries;

(c) Assist governments to develop innovative ways to mobilize and package financial resources, including support to the development of national anti-desertification funds;

(d) Provide UNDP facilities for, and assist in the design of, the global mechanism established under the Convention to mobilize and channel resources to affected countries;

(e) Assist with capacity-building and other cross-cutting issues in accordance with the provisions of the Convention;

(f) Buttress substantively and, if requested, jointly service with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the secretariat of the Convention, irrespective of where it is located.

5. In the context of the urgent actions foreseen for Africa, UNDP will:

(a) Support the preparation and implementation of the national action programmes, including the establishment of national forums of partners (government, local community organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other civil society organizations and the donor community, including bilateral and multilateral agencies);

(b) Serve as a catalyst in key anti-desertification activities for which UNDP, based on the ongoing work of UNSO, has capacity and can assume a lead role, such as in the development of environmental information systems,

supporting development of drought preparedness and mitigation strategies/programmes and pastoral development;

(c) Assist affected countries in building capacities at local and national levels;

(d) Support subregional and regional activities to identify priorities for implementation;

(e) Provide technical and substantive support to the African Ad hoc Group of Experts on desertification;

(f) Assist in developing new, participatory approaches and strengthen NGO roles/contributions for the implementation of the Convention.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL AND FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

6. The Administrator foresees the following funding scenario for the UNDP contribution to desertification control efforts in affected countries:

(a) An intensified in-house collaboration of existing programmes/funds (national indicative planning figures (IPFs), Capacity 21, Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), Africa 2000) to ensure greater coordination, synergy and concerted capability to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;

(b) Mobilization of new and increased resources through voluntary contributions from interested donors for work in a number of critical areas requiring attention, particularly in support of the implementation of the Convention, as summarized in paragraph 4 above.

7. Considering the mandate accorded to UNDP and UNEP through UNSO in paragraph 27, chapter 38, of Agenda 21, and in the new context created by the Convention, the two organizations have agreed to intensify their collaboration through joint catalytic support for the implementation of the Convention. This includes building upon the existing UNSO-UNDP/UNEP Joint Venture mechanism. To help mobilize resources to support interim activities under the Convention, particularly in Africa, it is proposed that the UNSO-UNDP/UNEP Joint Venture become a special desertification and dryland management facility, established under the authority of the Administrator, benefiting from the experience of UNEP and the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities. This facility will be used to provide seed resources for catalyzing voluntary contributions from interested donors and other partners.

8. Those wishing to contribute to the facility will be able to target their contributions for use in any affected geographic region and/or for thematic activities. In order to enhance collaboration, effectiveness and transparency in the programming and use of the resources of this facility, a management advisory group will be established, composed of representatives of the major donors to the facility, concerned subregional organizations and/or affected countries. Special attention will be given to Africa, particularly in line with the urgent action for the implementation of the Convention. The present resources of the existing United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities will be used for the Sudano-Sahelian region as originally earmarked.

9. For the future, concerning the financial mechanisms for the Convention, the Administrator believes that UNDP is well placed to serve as a conduit and offers its services to host the Global Mechanism under the Convention for promoting actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of funds for its implementation. In such an event, UNDP would continue to work in close

collaboration with UNEP as well as concerned United Nations and other organizations.

V. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

10. The Executive Board may wish to:

1. Take note of the present report;

2. Appeal to all interested donor countries, organizations and other parties to make voluntary contributions to the facility described in paragraph 7 of the present document;

3. Encourage the Administrator to continue to promote UNDP actions in support of the implementation of the Convention, including the Global Mechanism for channelling funds under the Convention.

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